

Setting Up the Scapegoat

Who Is To Blame for the Loss of Cuba?

by Gilbert A. Harrison

For nearly 20 months a subcommittee of the Senate Committee on the Judiciary has been holding hearings, ostensibly on "the Communist threat to the United States through the Caribbean," presided over by James O. Eastland of Mississippi. He is assisted by Senators Dodd, Johnston of South Carolina, McClellan, Ervin, Hruska, Dirksen, Keating and Cotton. How many witnesses have been called has not been disclosed. The testimony of only a few has been released, and that has been edited before publication. It was said that the investigation was inspired by Democrats hoping to embarrass a Republican Administration by implicating it in the loss of Cuba. But the gamiest parts of the testimony have been made public since Mr. Eisenhower's departure, and one searches it in vain for uncomplimentary references to Republicans.

Out of this weird jumble of inaccuracies, irrelevancies and plain absurdities emerges a discernible purpose: to pin responsibility now on "the liberals," not only for the loss of Cuba but for any future losses in Latin America - whether in Haiti or the Dominican Republic or Panama. From first to last (though the last has yet to come) the Subcommittee has used its investigative authority to muddy those who have not been willing to equate the national interest with business interests and who have stood against identifying the US with the maintenance of dictatorships.

I have read all the testimony one is permitted to see. It is ludicrous - and sinister. For if the President is correct, that things may get worse before they get better (and that applies to Latin America), we may soon be asked to wreak our vengeance on a scapegoat this Committee has invented. The whole of these hearings is a repeat performance of the drama about "Who lost China" - a fairy tale of sell-out by subversives, leftists and other oddballs in the government, the press and the Congress.

It is for this reason that these hearings are worth looking at with some care. And we begin with Arthur Gardner, Chairman of the Board of Bundy Tubing Company and our Ambassador to Havana from 1953 to 1955. He gave his testimony on August 29, 1960:

Senator Dodd: Mr. Gardner, you have been quoted as

saying that Washington "pulled the rug out" from under Batista. Is this a correct quote and if so, what did you mean by that?

Mr. Gardner: Yes, I think it is a correct quote. I mean that Batista had always leaned toward the United States. I don't think we ever had a better friend. . . . He was doing an amazing job. . . . When we talk about pulling out the rug, I mean there are a number of factors that occurred repeatedly that showed that the State Department did not want to have anything to do with Batista.

Ambassador Gardner's successor in Havana, Earl E. T. Smith, took a broader view of where the guilt lay: the Department was at fault, yes; but not just the Department. Batista, he told the Subcommittee on August 30, 1960, "was overthrown because of the corruption, disintegration from within, and because of the United States and the various agencies of the United States who directly and indirectly aided the overthrow of the Batista Government and brought into power Fidel Castro." This double-edged explanation did not, however, satisfy the chief counsel of the subcommittee:

Mr. Sourwine: What were those agencies, Mr. Smith?

Mr. Smith: The US Government agencies. . . . Certain influential people, influential sources in the State Department, lower down echelons in the CIA. I would say representatives of the majority of the US Government agencies which have anything to do with the Embassy.

Senator Eastland: As a matter of fact, isn't it your judgment that the State Department of the United States is primarily responsible for bringing Castro to power in Cuba?

Mr. Smith: was reluctant to say that, although he admitted the "State Department played a large part in bringing Castro to power."

Senator Eastland: But your advice was that it was not in the best interest of the United States for him to come to power, and in spite of that then you say that the American Government is primarily responsible for putting him in power? . . . Do you agree with it?

Mr. Smith: Would you repeat that, what Senator East-